

## Stutsman County Planning and Zoning Commission Minutes – February 12, 2014

At 8:05 a.m. the meeting was called to order by Planning and Zoning Chairman Harold Bensch. Present were Katie Andersen, Dan Buchanan, Brian Amundson, Ryan Odenbach, Dale Marks, Dave Schwartz, Duane Andersen and Dustin Bakken, Zoning Administrator.

Bakken began discussion, reporting that Stutsman County had received an application in January for the siting of a wind farm in northeast Stutsman County under the name Courtenay Wind LLC, by Geronimo Energy.

Justin Pickar, Director of Development for Geronimo Energy, gave an introduction & some history of the project, including the beginning stages that occurred years ago.

Patrick Smith, Director of Environmental Planning for Geronimo Energy, discussed the project that he said began back in 2008. The project is a 200.5 megawatt wind farm & a 115 kilovolt transmission line. They received their certificate of site compatibility & signed a contract with Xcel Energy for the purchase of the energy for the next 20 years. The project consists of up to 127 turbines that consist of up to 4 different models of turbines. The project also consists of access roads, an underground electrical collection system, substations, a couple of meteorological towers, & transmission feeder lines. In the application there are two tables that highlight Geronimo's compliance with the Stutsman County zoning ordinance, table 3 & table 4 in the application.

Patrick then spoke about some of the community benefits. Geronimo has what is called Courtenay Wind Farmers LLC that allows people in the community to invest in the project. It's a completely separate LLC from Geronimo. Another Geronimo practice is that they set up a community fund, a non-profit organization, which receives approximately \$40,000 every year from the project's revenue that's used to reinvest in the community. He talked a little about the tax revenue. There'll be approximately \$460,000 that will go to the school districts, \$327,000 to the county, \$79,000 to the townships involved, & \$17,000 to the local fire districts.

Dan B. posed a question to Geronimo about the 1% of above ground structures/facilities to make sure it doesn't disrupt the ag use of the land. Patrick responded that the above ground structures/facilities will be the turbines, substation, a mechanical shop, & that there'll be access roads to the turbines.

Betsy Engelking, Vice President of Development for Geronimo, spoke up about how the project does not intend to disrupt farming activities. She said that most farmers find it easy to farm around the turbines.

Duane Andersen asked Dustin if the valuation of the land will change for the parcels that have tower sites on them. Dustin responded that the wind farm itself is centrally assessed by the State Tax Department. Ag valuation won't change since the sites only take up around 1% of the land, adjustments will not be made due to the project being a management decision of the property owner.

Dale Marks brought up a concern from a past meeting about the airstrip that is southwest of the project. Patrick replied that the turbines that were planned in that area of the airstrip were removed from the planning.

Ryan O. asked about the road maintenance agreement. Patrick gave an explanation of how transportation is done & how roads have to be upgraded & extended to accompany the truck loads. Casey Bradley, Stutsman County Auditor, added that the road maintenance agreement was received by

the county & that development of the agreement is still in the works & hopes to be finalized within the next month or two. The road maintenance agreement is only for the townships that have the county's zoning ordinance, which includes Gray, Nogosek, Durham, & Courtenay townships. Casey added that a unique feature they built in to the road maintenance agreement is that it doesn't go into effect until each township, by resolution, adopts it & that it doesn't expire, & the funds don't get released, until each township agrees that the township is complete.

Rod Roaldson, resident, brought up a concern that the road by his house has very little gravel & causes lots of dust when dry, & mud when wet. He questioned what was going to be done for the roads with those issues. Patrick Smith responded that additional gravel will be added on those roads & making sure that there is sufficient dust suppression which is also provisions in the road maintenance agreement. Dave Schwartz added that there will be periodic inspections by county personnel to make sure the roads stay up to standards.

Dustin made a clarification that the board has two separate conditional use permits, one for the wind farm & the other for the transmission line. Patrick confirmed that & said that Geronimo would like to use the transmission line for future development.

Dustin began addressing the variance request. They looked at the map that showed which turbines requested a variance.

Jay Hesse, Project Manager for Geronimo Energy, addressed the setbacks of the turbines, which is two roto-diameters from any property lines, not just structures & public roads. Jay confirmed that everyone who is within the two roto-diameters has signed the variance.

Dustin mentioned that two of the turbines which are by Rod Roaldson's residence, #119 & #128 are being treated as alternate site options. Patrick said that there are 27 alternate site positions. They are alternates in the event that they need to be added to fulfill their contract with Xcel Energy.

No further discussion.

Brian Amundson made a motion to approve the conditional use permit for the wind farm turbines submitted from Geronimo Energy LLC. Dave Schwartz seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Schwartz made a motion to approve the conditional use permit for the transmission line. Duane Andersen seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Katie Andersen made a motion to approve the list of variances for the Courtenay wind farm project. Ryan Odenbach seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Schwartz motioned to adjourn the meeting, Amundson seconded the motion. Harold Bensch closed the meeting.